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ABSTRACT

Milton's style of pronominal reference in his essay, "Areopagitica," leads to a lack of comprehension at times and to slow processing. His use of demonstrative pronouns makes it difficult to identify antecedents precisely and quickly. For example, in one case a reader must go back over 400 words to find an antecedent. His use of relative pronouns produces the same confusing effect, requiring a time consuming, problem solving approach. Besides the same kind of processing problems caused by his use of demonstrative pronouns--remoteness of antecedent from pronoun, vagueness resulting from reference to a general idea of a preceding sentence, and reference to nouns that were not expressed but merely implied--his use of relative pronouns produces additional problems of placement and shifting. To readers lacking adequate knowledge or schemata of 17th century vocabulary, grammar, and oratory, Milton's formal style, long periodic sentences, unusual word order, ungrammatical sentences, and frequent coordination of phrases and clauses lead to difficulties of processing and require new strategies for decoding. (JL)

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An Experience with Milton's Discourse Reference: Pronouns and Processing

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Processing written material is usually not a problem for me. On the Nelson-Denny Reading Test Form B, taken a year ago, I had a total ram score of 155 for vocabulary and comprehension, a 99 percentile rank and a reading rate of 600+ words per minute. Apparently I had the skill to select the fewest, most productive cues necessary to produce guesses which were right the first time and was doing the anticipating, dipping, and selecting that Kenneth Goodman says the efficient reader does, using graphic, syntactic, and semantic information simultaneously. According to Goodman, redundancy and sequential constraints in language, which skilled readers react to, make the predictions of what's coming and the sampling to cue more semantic and syntactic information possible. I did this efficient processing on the test on a variety of expository, moderate-tension passages written by contemporary writers with different styles; these styles helped and in no way hindered my processing. Seventeenth century John Milton's style, however, hindered and in few ways helped my processing when I read his essay, "Areopagitica." This essay was a different experience for me. In a timed reading on part of the essay, my rate averaged about 250 words per minute, ranging from a high of 350 words per minute on some passages to a slow, low of 10 words per minute on certain passages, a word by word reading.

The slow processing resulted, no doubt, partly because I was reading reflectively, savoring Milton's eloquence, opulence, and stateliness: his bold figures, parallelisms, and rich rhythms; and partly because the essay was argumentative. Since I teach argumentative writing, I was

noticing his argumentative techniques. The main reason I read Milton so slowly, though, was because of the way he used his pronouns. Milton's style of pronominal reference resulted in my lack of comprehension at times and slow processing.

The first sentence of the essay illustrates some personal pronoun reference problems I had with his discourse.

> They, who to states and governors of the Commonwealth direct their speech, High Court of Parliament, or, wanting such access in a private condition, write that which they forsee may advance the public good; I suppose them, as at the beginning of no mean endeavour, not a little altered and moved inwardly in their minds: ...

Based on my past experience, I brought a number of schemata about pronouns to this sentence: personal pronouns function as replacements for co-referential noun phrases in neighboring (usually preceding) clauses; personal pronouns have two case forms. The subjective forms are used as subjects of finite verbs and often as subject complements; the objective forms are used as objects and as prepositional complements. When a personal pronoun is used near the beginning of a sentence, it must be in a subordinate clause and not a main clause, or the sentence is ungrammatical; the use of a pronoun to refer to a person or persons presupposes the listener knows who is being referred to; personal pronouns refer to specific individuals. Pronominalization requires a reader to search the discourse for the referent of the pronoun and the search begins at the contents of the discourse pointer or what has been foregrounded. My expectations for the sentence and my processing strategies are based on these schemata.

This text-initial sentence presented processing problems because it begins with the word they. I began reading the essay with uncertainty starting with the first word, for there was no previous sentence to refer to for the antecedent; and I expect preceding sentences with antecedents in order to identify which individuals already in the scene are the ones referred to by the pronoun. I know from they that the individuals referred to are plural, and I know they are animate and are the doers of the verbs direct and write since these two verbs are the predicates in the relative "who" clause that immediately follows they. The who would refer to they. But I don't know who they are. I saw the words High Court of Parliament after the relative clause and thought it might be in apposition for they at first but then decided this could not be so; Parliament wouldn't be directing speeches to states and governors of the Commonwealth because that's who Parliament is. Scanning ahead, I saw no other alternatives for they, but I did see an object pronoun them that could refer to they or Parliament. The persons them refers to are filled with doubt, fear, confidence or hope about their significant endeavour concerning the public good. Going beyond the text, I finally determined, because of the context of the sentence, that them and they are co-referential and that they must mean people in general, those people who direct their speeches to the High Court of Parliament and write those things that might advance the public good, addressing the writings to Parliament. I inferred that they meant people, which then would become the discourse pointer for the rest of the word group ending with the period. Before this happened, though, much mental work went on in my mind trying to determine referents, co-referents, a discourse pointer, the noun phrase for the appositive, and the

relationships between words and phrases and clauses. All of this inferring and determining took time, slowed down my processing and did cause some miscomprehension.

Milton begins paragraph 25 with they also.

> They are not skillful considerers of human things, who imagine to remove sin by removing the matter of sin;...

The preceding paragraph has no logical antecedents for they; it has as noun phrases such words as virtue, praise, Divine Providences, God, Adam, ourselves, we, He and pleasures. They requires an antecedent that is human and plural because of the verb considerers. Again, I had to infer that they meant people, the people who think that they can remove sin by removing the things that people sin with (these people) are not skillful considerers of human things. The inference wasn't too difficult to do, but the preliminary searching in the preceding paragraph and the subsequent inferring took time as they did in these examples of Milton's use of he to refer to an indefinite person. Examples like these abound in the essay.

1. For he who freely magnifies what hath been nobly done...
2. It cannot be denied that he who is made judge...

The way Milton uses demonstrative pronouns bothered me, too. Like personal pronouns, a demonstrative pronoun signals that the individual or thing it refers to has already been introduced into the scene. The demonstrative pronouns are signalers that mark the identity between what is being said and what has been said before. They have a 'deictic' reference which means they can point backwards (anaphoric) or forward (cataphoric) in discourse. These pronouns can be used to signal that a

noun phrase is referentially equivalent to a previous noun phrase since demonstratives (this, that, these, those) can be used as pro-forms for noun phrases. Often Milton will use one of these demonstrative pronouns in an opening sentence of a paragraph, and in order to find out what was being referred to by <u>those</u> or <u>this</u>, I had to reread the preceding paragraph to find the noun phrase equivalent. They were usually so far away from the pronoun that I had difficulty in remembering the noun phrase referred to, or else I had difficulty in determining the idea or concept being referred to. Sometimes, because of the numbers of different kinds of pronouns used in one sentence, it was difficult to tell a <u>that</u> demonstrative from a <u>that</u> appositive noun phrase or a <u>that</u> relative pronoun. <u>That</u>, at times, looked like it was in a parallel structure when it wasn't. Sometimes Milton would end a long paragraph with a sentence using a demonstrative pronoun, and to find the referent would take the scanning of two previous paragraphs. These demonstrative pronoun problems are evident in the following paragraphs:

Paragraph 6

> But if from the industry of a life wholly dedicated to studious labours, and those natural endowments haply not the worse for two and fifty degrees of northern latitude, so much must be derogated, as to count me not equal to any of those who had this privilege, I would obtain to be
> 1 thought not so inferior, as yourselves are superior to the most of them who received <u>their</u> counsel: and how far you excel them, be assured, Lords and Commons, there can no greater testimony appear, than when your prudent spirit acknowledges and obeys the voice of reason from what quarter soever it be heard speaking; and renders ye as willing to repeal any Act of your own setting forth, as any set forth by your predecessors.

Paragraph 2

> Which though I stay not to confess ere any ask, I shall be blameless, if it be no other than the joy and gratulation

which it brings to all who wish and promote their country's liberty; whereof this whole discourse proposed will be a certain testimony, if not a trophy. For this is not the liberty which we can
2 hope, that no grievance ever should arise in the Commonwealth-that let no man in this world expect; but when complaints are freely heard, deeply considered and speedily reformed, then is the utmost bound of civil liberty attained that wise men look for.

Paragraph 12

I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather; that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary. That virtue therefore which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank virtue, not a pure; her whiteness is but an excremental whiteness. Which
3 was the reason why our sage and serious poet Spenser, whom I dare be known to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas, describing true temperance under the person of Guion, brings him in with his palmer through the cave of Mammon, and the bower of earthly bliss, that he might see and know, and yet obstain. Since therefore the knowledge and survey of vice is in this world so necessary to the constituting of human virtue, and the scanning of error to the confirmation of truth, how can we more safely, and with less danger, scout into the regions of sin and falsity than by reading all manner of tractates and hearing all manner of reason? And this is the benefit which may be had of books promiscuously read.

4 .... (Paragraph 27) Paragraph 28

Yet though ye should condescend to this, which God forbid, the Order still would be but fruitless and deflective to that end whereto ye meant it.

5 .... (Paragraph 43)

This is not, ye Covenants and protestations that we have made!! This is not to put down Prelaty; this is but to chop an Episcopacy; this is but to translate

the Palace Metropolitan from one kind or dominion into another; this is but an old canonical sleight of commuting our penance.

6 .... Paragraph 46
Paragraph 47

.... These are the fruits which a dull ease and cessation of our knowledge will bring forth among the people.

What bothered me in processing these paragraphs was my inability to identify the antecedents precisely and quickly to determine what the sentence was about in the paragraphs that used the demonstrative pronoun in the first sentence as the subject or in a summary sentence at the end as a subject. Because of the way these demonstratives were used, I was forced to read some sentences and paragraphs twice. I did piece out the meaning, but it took time; my eyes made many regressions on the search for antecedents.

In the final example from paragraph 6, I had a question in my mind as to who <u>those</u> referred to. There was no possible plural animate noun phrase equivalent in the preceding parts of the sentence, so I needed to refer to the preceding paragraph. In that paragraph there were several plural animate noun phrases: Lords and Commons, Goths, Jutlanders, Parliament of Athens, men who professed the study of wisdom and eloquence, Rodians. After inferring that <u>this privilege</u> referred to the privilege of having a life wholly dedicated to studious labours and using the context of the preceding paragraph where Milton gives examples of specific Greeks who did live such lives dedicated to studious labours, I then realized that <u>those</u> must mean the Greeks, the private orators who felt confident enough to admonish and counsel the Rodians against a former edict. Milton feels he is as capable as these men. The <u>them who received</u>

their counsel has the sense of those who received their counsel and presented the same problem as those earlier. The them must be referring to the Rodians and the their to the private Greek orators, the learned eloquent citizens who counseled the Members of Athen's Parliament.

Milton was comparing his Parliament to the Greek Parliament, both of which had citizen advice, and saying that his Parliament was superior, evidenced by their past behavior in being reasonable enough to repeal their own or their predecessor's laws when needed. The passage would have been clearer if he had turned the demonstrative pronoun into a demonstrative article by adding the words those private Greek orators, and those Rodians who received the private orators' Counsel. The noun phrase this privilege would have been clearer if he had said this privilege of living a life dedicated to study. The repetition and redundancy furnish the means for identifying what's being talked about or foregrounded and for processing the sentence more efficiently. As a reader I expected the clear specification of antecedents and enough redundancy to play my hunches and predict.

The example from paragraph 2 presented more demonstrative problems. The pronoun this made me look ahead to see what it referred to; this was puzzling because it points to some idea not yet hinted at. Pronouns are clear when their antecedents are subjects or objects of a preceding finite verb. The antecedent follows this in an appositive noun phrase which is itself loose. It is a relative pronoun "that" clause which uses that to refer to an idea rather than a specific substantive. That actually refers to the liberty which we can hope, an idea. Referring to an idea makes that a vague pronoun. To complicate matters, another that appears

after the last word in the appositive noun phrase. This that, however, is not a relative pronoun but a demonstrative pronoun, and its position and use caused me miscomprehension on my first reading. I anticipated another relative clause, parallel structure. I needed to reanalyze the sentence and sort out what Milton was doing syntactically and what he was saying.

The last sentence of paragraph 12 baffled me for quite awhile. This, the subject, refers to what? What is the benefit of reading books promiscuously? This should refer to what the whole paragraph is about, the dominant idea. The dominant idea is that true virtue cannot come about without knowledge of vice, and truth cannot come about without knowing error and falsities. Knowing this, though, doesn't tell me what the benefit is of promiscuous reading. I needed to infer that promiscuous reading results in virtue and truth. Yet these are two benefits and Milton (then would have) mentioned only one benefit. So I tried using safely scouting into the regions of sin and falsity to attain virtue and truth, but this couldn't be a benefit. Then I thought perhaps he meant the ability to scout safely into regions of sin and falsity as the benefit. I was still not sure. If Milton had added some words after this to identify what he referred to, I would have had no processing problem. After rereading preceding paragraph 11, I finally realized the benefit must be the knowing good and evil. Again, this refers not to an equivalent noun phrase but to the idea of knowing good and evil that the reader must infer. The reader must go back over 400 words to find out what has been foregrounded and to determine the antecedent for this. The need to remember that far back and the need to infer put a burden on me and bogged me down.

I needed to use the same strategies in paragraph 47 with these are the fruits which a dull ease and cessation of our knowledge will bring forth among the people. I finally determined that the fruits were uncritical religious thinking and uncritical thinking in general. I needed to analyze and parse two long paragraphs, however, to reach this conclusion. This... this... this... this... this..., the first sentence in paragraph 43 is another example. The preceding paragraph has the referent, inquisitioning (licensing). The last example, paragraph 28, begins with a sentence using this, "Yet though ye should condescend to this..." Here I only had to refer back to the last sentence of the preceding paragraph to find the referent, the general idea of reforming the Order according to the model of Trent and Seville (the Spanish Inquisition). Milton's demonstrative pronouns confused me because of their remoteness from their antecedents, their vaguely referring to the general idea of a preceding sentence, and their referring to a noun that wasn't expressed but only implied in preceding remote sentences.

His use of relative pronouns had the same confusing effect on me. Trying to unravel the relationships between his relative pronouns and what they modified and referred to required a time-consuming, problem-solving approach on my part. I tried to select the correct referent for the relative pronoun using information in previous sentences or else my own knowledge of what was going on in order to match the most plausible candidate referent to the relative pronoun. The problem-solving strategy worked, but it took time. The following passages and sentences illustrate Milton's style in using relative pronouns. (His style markers consist of) the frequency of the which clause, the quantity of which and that

clauses in a single sentence or paragraph, the shifting to the left of the which from the subordinate clause, the beginning of clauses and sentences with which, the use of a preposition before which, and the use of the relative antecedent before which.

Paragraph 1

They, who to states and governors of the Commonwealth direct their speech, High Court of Parliament, or, wanting such access in a private condition, write that which they foresee may advance the public good; I suppose them, as at the beginning of no mean endeavour, not a little altered and moved inwardly in their minds: some with doubt of what will be the success, others with fear of what will be the censure; some with hope, others with confidence of what they
1 have to speak.[1] And me perhaps each of these dispositions, as the subject was whereon I entered, may have at other times variously affected; and likely might in these foremost expressions now also disclose which of them swayed most, but that the very attempt of this address thus made, and the thought of whom it hath recourse to, hath got the power within me to a passion, far more welcome than incidental to a preface.

Which though I stay not to confess ere any ask, I shall be blameless, if it be no other than the joy and gratulation which it brings to all who wish and promote their country's liberty; whereof this whole discourse proposed will be a certain testimony, if not a trophy.[2] For this is not the liberty which we can hope, that no grievance ever should arise in the Commonwealth--that let no man in this world expect; but when complaints are freely heard, deeply considered and speedily reformed, then is the utmost bound of civil liberty attained that wise men look for. To which if I now manifest by the very sound of this which I shall utter, that we are already in good part arrived, and yet from such a steep disadvantage of tyranny and superstition grounded into our principles as was beyond the manhood of a Roman recovery,[3] it will be attributed first, as is most due, to the strong assistance of God our deliverer, next to your faithful guidance and undaunted wisdom, Lords and Commons of England. Neither is it in God's esteem the diminution of His glory, when honourable

things are spoken of good men and worthy magistrates; which if I now first should begin to do, after so fair a progress of your laudable deeds, and such a long obligement upon the whole realm of your indefatigable virtues, I might be justly reckoned among the tardiest, and the unwillingest of them that praise ye.

Paragraph 12

.... Which was the reason why our sage and serious
2 poet Spencer, whom I dare be known to think a better teacher...

Paragraph 29

3 ...; which is also no mean injury.

Paragraph 35

4 nay, which is more lamentable, if the work of any...

Paragraph 18

5 which is what I promised to deliver next,...

Paragraph 19

6 ...; which they not following, leave us a pattern...

Paragraph 14

7 .... By which compendious way all the contagion that...

Paragraph 19

8 To which I return, that as it was a thing slight...

Paragraph 20

9 By which laws he seems to tolerate no kind...

Paragraph 17

10 ..., that which being restrained will be no hindrance...

Paragraph 17

11 ... that from him which is unfit for his reading,...

Paragraph 20

12 ..., feel his fancy by making many edicts to his airy burgomasters, which they who otherwise...

Paragraph 20

13 ...other provisos there set down in his fancied republic, which in this world could have...

Paragraph 23

14 Nor is it Plato's licensing of books will do this, which necessarily pulls along... as will make us all...

Paragraph 36

15 Judicious more than ordinary, which will be a...

In Milton's essay the first and second paragraphs have a total of four sentences and fourteen relative clauses. Three of the fourteen pronouns are personal and two are general purpose that pronouns and ten are which pronouns with one being a that which construction, one being a to which construction, and one being a whereof construction with the sense of a which pronoun. Paragraphs are easy to process when there are few propositions and when the theme is repeated many times. When paragraphs have as many different propositions as these do, they become complex and hard to process because of the number of referents that need to be determined, the number of relationships that need to be understood, and the number of propositions that need to be remembered. Slow processing results from the rereading, the scanning backwards and forward to find referents, the surprise at finding a paragraph begin with a which, a sentence begin with a to which and an apparent new main clause after a semicolon that begins with a which.

The sentences and clauses beginning with the relative pronoun were unexpected. I am used to sentences beginning with a subject and then

having a verb follow. I look for topic sentences in paragraphs and SV or SVO patterns in sentences. The indentation for a new paragraph is a graphic clue that I rely on I expect a topic sentence containing a generalization or the discourse pointer. When, instead, I see a pronoun with no apparent referent, I'm surprised and puzzled. Then problem-solving begins in order for me to find the referent and also the subject and verb of the new paragraph's first sentence and the dominant idea of the paragraph. When I saw the sentence beginning, which though I stay not to confess ere any ask, I shall be blameless, I needed to use many mental operations to make sense of it. I determined that it was really a fragment and could have been attached to the sentence of the preceding paragraph. Which had to refer to passion in the preceding sentence. Before I determined that it did, however, I tried to select several inanimate nouns as candidates for an antecedent, and I tried several word groups as possibilities for the subordinate clause that which belonged to. I ended up attaching it to if it be no other than the joy...Which had been shifted left of the subordinate clause it belonged in, with two other clauses between. I had to check both of these clauses out as possible clauses that which had shifted out of. To which, I had to infer meant a situation discussed in the preceding sentence. To which (situation) (the one when the utmost limit of civil liberty abounds when complaints are heard, considered and reformed) can be interpreted as meaning: The situation in which the epitome of civil liberty exists can be attributed to God and to your guidance and wisdom, Parliament. The ;which if I now first should begin to do, required my going back to the preceding clause to find out what he was going to do. I found nothing

appropriate, so decided to take the passive clause when honorable things are spoken of good men and worthy magistrates; and make it active. Then I inferred that which must refer to the idea of speaking honorable things of good men and worthy magistrates. The that which clause I realized used that to mean those writings which they foresee may advance the public good. Milton used that to refer to writings. This reference I had to infer from his use of the verb write. Which of them meant which ones of these foremost dispositions or preliminary remarks affected me the most. The thought of whom it hath recourse to I determined to mean the thought of those "people" (the High Court of Parliament) it (this address or speech) is directed toward has excited me to a high degree. And in a preface this strong feeling is an asset. The word group, of this which I shall utter I realized meant "of this pronouncement, or truism, or statement, that we are already in good part arrived at the condition of utmost civil liberty when complaints are freely heard, deeply considered, and speedily reformed, which I shall utter." The rearranging of sentence parts, scanning forward and backwards, reconstructing, inferring, relating, and analyzing took a great deal of time. Milton's cohesion, his discourse and sentence relating style, depends on presupposition within his text and outside his text.

The rest of the examples given illustrate more of the problems exemplified in the first two paragraphs. Example 2-7 all show which clauses that begin paragraphs, sentences, or clauses after a semicolon in a compound sentence. Which from paragraph 12 has as its referent the general idea that in order to understand virtue and truth people must know about sin and error. "Knowing this idea to be true was the reason

Spenser had Guion brought in with a palmer through the cave of Mammon and bower of earthly bliss so he could know sin and yet abstain, therefore, symbolizing true temperance." Which in paragraph 29 refers to the necessity of not having any trivial mistakes in the censure of what is passable or not. In paragraph 35, which refers to a licenser, even a judicious one, needing to censor all books except books already received and accepted by the common people. In paragraph 18 which is pointing forward to the idea that the licensing law will not achieve what it was meant to achieve. The proposed law has already affected Milton in his writing even though the law is still being discussed. He means to say My next point is this: the licensing law will not achieve...Which in paragraph 19 points back to the preceding words such a course, which in turn point back to some idea needing to be inferred. Since the dominant idea of the paragraph was that no nation that valued books ever practiced licensing, I inferred that such a course must refer to the course of action of allowing books to be printed without licensing. The to which I return in this paragraph means, "I comment on this previous statement that the wisdom of not licensing books might be just recently acquired wisdom by remarking that we've always had men among us who suggested not licensing books but who didn't act on their beliefs because of fear of public disapproval." By which in paragraph 20 refers to Plato's licensing laws in his utopian commonwealth mentioned in the first sentence of the paragraph. To get the full sense of the By which laws clause I had to go both backward and forward to determine the antecedent and meaning. Milton feels Plato meant the licensing laws only for a particular utopia and not for other men since Plato himself would have broken the licensing law.

In paragraph 17 the that which being restrained will be no hindrance to his folly clause has that referring to the "object" which is restrained. This object is, of course, the books that would be no hindrance to his folly. In the next sentence the words, that from him which is really an interrupted that which from him is unfit for his reading clause. That means "that book which is unfit for his reading." Milton states here that by trying to keep unfit books away from the wise man, the Parliament wouldn't give him credit for being able to think well and make good judgments and so would also prevent him from extracting the good material that always exists even in a poor book. In the same paragraph, the line But that he knew this licensing of poems had reference and dependence to many other provisos there set down in his fancied republic, which in this world could have no place has which referring to an idea, the idea of setting down provisos in his fancied republic. Milton means that the licensing of poems had reference and dependence to other laws made for the utopian republic and therefore has no applicability to this world. In paragraph 23 the antecedent of this in Nor is it Plato's licensing of books will do this is the idea of mending a condition and which in which necessarily pulls along with it so many other kinds of licensing refers to licensing of books and as in as will make us all both ridiculous and weary and yet frustrated; is also used as a which. It has the sense of which and refers to other kinds of licensing. All of these examples show the way Milton uses the relative pronoun which or substitutes for it.

Milton caused me the same kind of processing problems with his use of relative pronouns as he did with his use of demonstrative pronouns with the addition of a few extra problems. There was the same remoteness of antecedent from the pronoun, usually requiring anaphoric scanning, but

sometimes cataphoric, the same vagueness resulting from reference to a general idea of a preceding sentence, and the same reference to nouns that were not expressed but merely implied. Additional problems of placement and shifting interfered with my processing, also. The unexpected placement of the relative pronoun which at the beginning of a paragraph, sentence or clause required different strategies in order for me to process as did the shifting of the which to the left out of the subordinate clause. I hadn't realized before how much I depended on precise antecedents; recent, preceding antecedents; repetition of some or all of the antecedent: paragraphs with a main clause first; sentences with a subject first; and relative clauses with the verb following the relative pronoun as clues for efficient reading. Because I felt that pronouns are by nature anchored to something already clearly identified and not to something vague or yet to be identified and that their function is to avoid unnecessary repetition but not to create suspense or pose puzzling problems, I felt frustration and irritation while I was reading this essay. At times I felt resentment at the amount of extra mental effort that was required on my part in order to solve Milton's discourse reference problems.

John Milton is definitely a heavy noun phrase. And his heaviness is not only a result of his pronoun style; it is also a result of his formal style, long periodic sentences, unusual word order, ungrammatical sentences and frequent coordination of phrases and clauses. My processing problems with this "heavy noun phrase" were also partly a result of my background and experiences. I did not bring to this reading experience adequate knowledge or schemata of seventeenth century vocabulary, grammar, oratory,

history, and John Milton. I did come to the essay with the expectation that I would understand it and I did, too; but it took me longer than I expected. In order to decode I became aware that I needed to use different strategies than I was used to using and that I needed to shift from one strategy to another according to the situation Milton presented. An awareness developed in me of the amount of scanning, selecting, searching, tentative choosing and testing based on syntactic and semantic input, and the regressing that I did as I decoded "Areopagitica." I came to a realization of the importance of pronominal reference in discourse, and the effect it had on my comprehension and speed of processing. Reading this essay closely brought to me an appreciation of syntax, semantics, the reading process and John Milton. Even though John Milton is a heavy noun phrase, I like him, and I know that I can handle him slowly but surely in spite if his pronoun style.

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